

PUBLIC COMMENTS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 2010

6:00 p.m.

In the Matter of the Application for a High Transmission  
Line Route Permit for the Essar Steel Transmission  
Project

PUC Docket Number: E-280/TL-09-512

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1                   MR. STORM: And with that, I'm going to  
2 turn it over to comments. I will start by reading  
3 and asking people to come up who have filled out  
4 cards. Once I get through the two cards that I've  
5 got, I will then do a show of hands. If what  
6 somebody said here or what I've said sparked an  
7 interest or a comment from you, then I'll do a show  
8 of hands and ask you to come up and speak.

9                   And, again, I ask you to speak slowly,  
10 state your name, and spell your name for the court  
11 reporter. And with that, I'm going to call up the  
12 first person on our cards, and that would be Shannon  
13 (phonetic).

14                  MS. ESKELI: Hi. My name is Shanna,  
15 S-H-A-N-N-A, Eskeli, E-S-K-E-L-I. I just wanted to  
16 go on record, the initial route 1A did not have our  
17 home as a residence. So I just wanted to go on  
18 record making sure that that is on there. We live  
19 there, that is our home.

20                  And then secondly, the initial proposed  
21 route center line on route 1A actually bisected our  
22 40 acres at a diagonal going directly over our  
23 residence. My husband and I just wanted to ask them  
24 if -- just to check to make sure it is a condition  
25 of the permit for it not to do that for our

1 residence and our property.

2 MR. STORM: Okay. Thank you.

3 And even though this is like my tenth  
4 time up on the Range, I tend to have a lot of Range  
5 sites and some of you people might know me, I'm  
6 still terrible with your names here. So I  
7 apologize, as I always do, because I'm going to  
8 screw this up. Terri Mjolness (phonetic).

9 MS. MJOLNESS: That's close. It's  
10 actually Terri Mjolsness, and it's T-E-R-R-I and  
11 that's M-J-O-L-S-N-E-S-S.

12 I have a couple comments. Again, if you  
13 weren't here in July, I'm the mother of two children  
14 with cancer, two adult children. They were born and  
15 raised under the existing power line. Naturally,  
16 when I was notified there was going to be even more  
17 EMF, that kind of freaked me right out.

18 I'm wondering why this size of an impact  
19 statement, we get this much on human health  
20 (indicating), not even a full page. I definitely  
21 want to see more realtime studies in the  
22 environmental impact statement. I'd like to see a  
23 little bit more specific, a little bit more current  
24 studies, data. And a little bit more world study  
25 and data, not just one.

1 I'd also like to see some reports of  
2 actual cases of illnesses that they link to the  
3 power lines, and I would also like to see some  
4 comments of how doctors feel about EMF. And I would  
5 also like to -- in this statement right now, they  
6 talk about EMF, that it's found this link to be  
7 weak.

8 I want to know, you know, a little bit  
9 more specific about how much EMF they're talking  
10 about. You know, I mean, just -- I mean, are they  
11 talking about just one little smidgen of EMF or are  
12 they talking a whole pile of EMF, and how much  
13 you're exposed to as far as whether they feel it's,  
14 you know, weak or not?

15 Does that make sense?

16 MR. STORM: I understand.

17 MS. MJOLSNESS: Okay.

18 MR. STORM: Okay. Thank you.

19 Okay. That's the two people who filled  
20 out cards to speak. Is there anyone who having --

21 Okay. Sir, if you would step up to the  
22 mic, state and spell your name, please.

23 MR. McDONALD: Thank you. My name is  
24 Michael McDonald, M-I-C-H-A-E-L, M-C-D-O-N-A-L-D.

25 And I guess I just want to go on record

1 with these comments: Being I have two existing  
2 lines going through my property right now and the  
3 line that they are talking about possibly using is a  
4 dead line right now that they want to utilize, it's  
5 a 230 kilovolt line.

6 And they want 30 more feet of my  
7 right-of-way, which it's going to go right over my  
8 garage, it's going to take all kinds of my trees out  
9 of my backyard. My maple trees that I use for  
10 making maple syrup are going to be gone. And also,  
11 the carbon credits that I could possibly sell  
12 someday would be leaving with those trees.

13 And I just want to go on record saying  
14 that that has got to be taken into consideration,  
15 too.

16 And, also, if this high voltage line goes  
17 in, I have high-speed Internet satellite, which  
18 works occasionally. And I also have DISH TV and I'm  
19 just kind of wondering what these high voltage lines  
20 are going to do to that signal on my property  
21 because my dish is pointed in that direction.

22 And in talking to the man from Minnesota  
23 Power tonight, they said that they can possibly  
24 stack the lines going across my land instead of  
25 running parallel, which would be a great benefit to

And the last thing is that for years these power companies have used people's lines, they have a one-time payment gratuity, and that's what's evident is going to happen again. And I think that landowners are footing the bills for all these industries up here but get nothing throughout the lifetime of this power line right-of-way. And I think that there should be something, whether it be tax breaks or a yearly gratuity for the landowners for the use of their land that they have restrictions on because of this line.

MR. STORM: Thank you, Mike.

Yes, sir, in the back. Please come up to  
state and spell your name.

And when I'm looking out there in the

1 morning, the evening, or the daytime sitting out  
2 there, I'll be looking right at them. And I don't  
3 think it's going to be a pretty site to look at, we  
4 have some nice property there now.

5 And the question is, what kind of value  
6 depreciation on my property with a big H-frame  
7 running them through and looking right at it from my  
8 deck side, okay? That's part of my question.

9 And my great-granddaughter lives just  
10 one-eighth of a mile from that line, and what kind  
11 of health effect it's going to have on her.

12 We have -- that land is farmed right now  
13 and so all the equipment for the plowing, barreling,  
14 cutting hay, raking hay, or bailing hay has to go  
15 around those poles each time. It's not very easy to  
16 go around. It's a waste of time for our equipment  
17 to not get no product because you can't cut right  
18 straight through. I think that alternate route on  
19 the east of 65 is a better route.

20 Thank you.

21 MR. STORM: Excuse me, can you give me  
22 your card there, sir?

23 Thank you, Arnold.

24 Anyone else want to make a comment  
25 tonight?



1                   Okay. With that, I'll want to thank you  
2                   for coming out. The comment period on the draft  
3                   EIS, as I said, extends to March 26th. As I also  
4                   mentioned, we will be back up here on April 7th for  
5                   the hearing in front of the ALJ.

6                   And that is an opportunity for the public  
7                   to speak to the project. It's a broader subject --  
8                   or a more open meeting, in that, as I said tonight's  
9                   meeting is to take comments on the draft EIS. When  
10                  we come back up here for the hearing on the 7th of  
11                  April, that's an opportunity for the public to speak  
12                  on any aspect of the project they would like to  
13                  speak on. And it also is an opportunity for the  
14                  public to question or cross-examine, if you will,  
15                  the applicant and the applicant's representatives on  
16                  various issues surrounding this project.

17                  With that, I'll make one more pass, an  
18                  opportunity for people to speak on the draft EIS.

19                  Okay. Please take advantage of the  
20                  applicant's poster boards that are set up in the  
21                  back --

22                  Oh, yes (indicating).

23                  MS. MJOLSNESS: Now, you're going to take  
24                  our comments and then do some more, when can we see  
25                  what you've come with, again, the changes to the

1 environmental impact statement, when will we be able  
2 to see them or find them?

3 MR. STORM: What I'll do is after the  
4 period closes on the 26th of March, I will begin  
5 working on the final EIS. I'm hoping to have the  
6 final EIS completed and into the record before the  
7 record closes on the hearing.

8 Jeff, do you have a date? I don't  
9 remember the date off the top of my head what we  
10 picked.

11 MR. MADEJCZYK: The record closes --

12 MR. STORM: Well, we're probably five  
13 weeks away, six weeks away from that. And what I'll  
14 do is if you're on my project contact list, you will  
15 get a notification that the final EIS is done and  
16 available. And it also will be listed on website  
17 that spoke to, as well as when you get the notice,  
18 you can call me up and I can send you out a hardcopy  
19 or a disk, if you want.

20 MS. MJOLSNESS: Will you e-mail us?

21 MR. STORM: Will we e-mail you a notice?

22 MS. MJOLSNESS: That it's done, yeah.

23 MR. STORM: If you provide me your e-mail  
24 address, I will e-mail you the notice when I mail  
25 them out. So you'll get both the hardcopy and then

1           you'll get an e-mail copy if I have your e-mail  
2           address, and that will just tell you that the final  
3           EIS is available.

4                   UNIDENTIFIED: Do you have an approximate  
5           date of when you're going to know the exact routes?

6                   MR. STORM: The process is a yearlong  
7           process. By rule, we're required to have the case  
8           brought back before the Commission within a year  
9           from the time they accept the application. They  
10          accepted the application on June 29th, so that's  
11          what I shoot for for my target date to bring the  
12          project back to the PUC. So I'm looking at the end  
13          of June of this year.

14                   UNIDENTIFIED: You'll know the actual  
15          routes by then?

16                   MR. STORM: Yeah. And what will happen  
17          is when the ALJ releases his report, he will make  
18          his report, make a recommendation on what routes he  
19          thinks should be selected and what conditions. And  
20          then, I'll take that in the record and I'll lay that  
21          before the Commission in the public meeting down in  
22          St. Paul, and then that will be one of the decision  
23          points the Commission makes at that meeting.

24                   Anybody else want to ask -- anybody else  
25          want to speak to the draft EIS?

1                   Okay. Does anybody want to ask me a  
2 process question on the process? I don't normally  
3 do this, but since we have such a light crowd here,  
4 if you want to ask me a question on the process, I  
5 can certainly answer that.

6                   Darrel, could you please come up to the  
7 mic.

8                   MR. WHITE: It's very short. My name is  
9 Darrel White, D-A-R-R-E-L, and White.

10                  Why haven't you told these people about  
11 Buy the Farm?

12                  MR. STORM: We have. We do have a  
13 section in the draft EIS that talks about that there  
14 is a Buy the Farm provision.

15                  MR. WHITE: Where is the notification of  
16 how it works and everything else? You asked for a  
17 question, I'm giving you one.

18                  MR. STORM: Okay. Probably because  
19 there's -- within the rule, when I do my job, when I  
20 run my process, I look at the rule and the rule  
21 tells me I have to notify on -- of these things at  
22 these dates, I have to hold these meetings on these  
23 dates, and on this time line. There's really no  
24 trigger in the rule that says I have to --

25                  MR. WHITE: It is the law, isn't it?

1                   MR. STORM: There is a rule in the books  
2                   which is commonly referred to as Buy the Farm.  
3                   That's not really what it's referred to, but in that  
4                   rule -- and we do cover that in the draft EIS, in  
5                   that rule, a line of this size, anything over  
6                   200 kilovolts crossing a property, there is  
7                   provisions in the rule that the landowner can  
8                   petition the Commission to force the utility to buy  
9                   the farm, to buy the whole property instead of just  
10                  the easement that crosses it.

11                 MR. WHITE: Thank you.

12                 MR. STORM: Anything else that I could  
13                  answer?

14                 Okay. Well, I really appreciate you  
15                  coming out in this process. It's important that the  
16                  people participate in this process, and real change  
17                  does happen based on the input we get from you  
18                  people within the rule and statutes that we have to  
19                  play by.

20                 Above that, it's a legislature issue. If  
21                  you have a problem with a statute or a rule, that's  
22                  something that needs to be brought to your  
23                  representatives.

24                 MS. MJOLSNES: What section in here  
25                  talks about the Buy the Farm or the --

1 MR. STORM: I would assume it's going to  
2 be in the regulatory --

3 MS. MJOLSNES: Process?

4 MR. STORM: Yeah. What I'll do is, I  
5 don't know exactly what session it is, but I will  
6 take that as a comment tonight. And if I  
7 neglected -- I'm sure I put it in there, but if I  
8 neglected to put it in here, it will be in the  
9 final.

10 UNIDENTIFIED: It's page 4-1 under  
11 right-of-way acquisition.

12 MR. STORM: Yes, sir. Please step to the  
13 mic. State and spell your name.

14 MR. McDONALD: I just have one more  
15 comment.

16 MR. STORM: State and spell your name  
17 again, please, sir.

18 MR. McDONALD: Michael McDonald, again,  
19 M-I-C-H-A-E-L, M-C-D-O-N-A-L-D.

20 When you mentioned politics, my mind  
21 started working. Because I contacted several of  
22 them already over this matter and they said that  
23 they can't do a darn thing until you people or  
24 Minnesota Power, whoever, comes and contacts us  
25 personally before they can do anything to help us.

1                   That's what I was told by Mr. Sag's  
2                   (phonetic), by Oberstar's office, and so our hands  
3                   are basically tied when you say go talk to your  
4                   politicians, but I would say go do it anyway.

5                   MR. STORM: Yeah. Let me clarify myself,  
6                   I knew I was going to get in trouble when I went off  
7                   the script here. What I see many times in this  
8                   process as I run the process is somebody that asks  
9                   me why am I doing something the way I'm doing it.  
10                  And my response will be, I follow a rule, 7850,  
11                  which is a Minnesota Rule, which comes out of  
12                  statute.

13                  And there are times when people don't  
14                  agree with what's in the rule and the statute, and I  
15                  guess the point I was making there was my hands are  
16                  tied. I have to play by the rules that are there.  
17                  If you want the rules to change, it's the  
18                  legislature that changes those rules. So that's  
19                  what I meant by that.

20                  MS. MJOLSNESS: Is there rules that are  
21                  governing this on what's listed as human health  
22                  risks and issues?

23                  MR. STORM: If you speak, come to the mic  
24                  please, state and spell your name.

25                  MS. MJOLSNESS: Terri Mjolsness,

1 M-J-O-L-S-N-E-S-S. Is there rules governing what  
2 you can put in this environmental impact statement  
3 about human health issues?

4 MR. STORM: There are. In the Rule 7850,  
5 if you look at Minnesota Chapter 7850, there are  
6 rules about what the application needs to contain as  
7 far as environmental and human health impacts of the  
8 project. And there are also rules that contain what  
9 the environmental impact statement should contain.  
10 But they're broad categories.

11 But I can certainly, after the meeting,  
12 pull my rule book out and show you, it's probably  
13 just a broad category that says human health  
14 impacts. You know, and usually EMF is a subcategory  
15 that comes into that category through the scoping  
16 process.

17 Although, it's also a default. Whenever  
18 we're talking about a transmission line, there's  
19 always going to be some discussion of EMF. But the  
20 rule doesn't get specific about what the  
21 subcategories are of the category of human health.  
22 That's what we do in scoping.

23 MS. MJOLSNES: Okay. So then we may not  
24 get what we're looking for in this because of a  
25 rule?



1                   MR. STORM: I wouldn't put it that way.  
2           What I would say is the rule says that we have to  
3           cover human health impacts in our environmental  
4           document. We come out and we have a scoping meeting  
5           and we ask, okay, under that category, what would  
6           you like to see?

7                   And many times, if not all the time, EMF  
8           is on there, Henshaw effect is usually on there.  
9           Another, interference with pacemakers is also on  
10          there. Those are the specific things that come out  
11          of scoping.

12                   Once a scoping decision is made, then we  
13          move into writing the environmental report. Now, we  
14          may -- through our research and through our  
15          consultation with the Department of Health and  
16          through our evaluation of peer-reviewed documents,  
17          we may come up with information that you don't agree  
18          with as a person.

19                   MS. MJOLSNESS: I wish you could tell me  
20          that there's no health risk, that my girls don't  
21          have cancer because we chose to live where we live  
22          or because there's a power line there. I wish you  
23          could tell me.

24                   MR. STORM: I certainly can't get into  
25          your specifics, but we have, in this environmental

1 document, talked about EMF and what the  
2 peer-reviewed science is telling us out there and  
3 what our own health department is telling us out  
4 there.

5 The EIS is not a conclusionary document.  
6 The EIS does not conclude anything. The EIS is to  
7 lay out the facts. And now we're here tonight to  
8 meet and talk about the EIS. If you come up to me  
9 and you say -- during this comment period you say,  
10 well, Bill, I think there's other information you  
11 should look at concerning EMF in your document, and  
12 these are three studies I think you should at,  
13 that's something we'll consider for the final. And  
14 we may come back and say, okay, we did look into  
15 that and we added it into the document.

16 Now, we won't make a determination of  
17 what's what, but we'll just add the fact that 20  
18 scientists over here say this, but there is a group  
19 that says this, and we do do that in this document,  
20 actually. But we can certainly flesh it more if you  
21 would like us to.

22 MS. MJOLSNESS: Please.

23 MR. STORM: And if you have specifics, if  
24 you can get down specifics, more than just saying,  
25 well, you laid out what the -- it's sort of like

1 global warming. If you laid out what the consensus  
2 is among the leaders out there, but you may not hold  
3 that belief and you may feel that your side of the  
4 story isn't laid out as well.

5 And if that's what you believe concerning  
6 EMF, write that comment to me, get that comment to  
7 me. And when we look at writing the final, we'll  
8 try to balance it out a little bit more. You know,  
9 but the EIS is not a conclusionary document. The  
10 EIS is not going to say --

11 MS. MJOLSNESS: It is or it isn't?

12 MR. STORM: It is or it isn't. It's just  
13 going to lay out here's the current state of  
14 knowledge. And so what we're trying to do in the  
15 EIS and what we're trying to do in the record is lay  
16 out -- balance information so that the Commission  
17 can make a determination -- a reasonable  
18 determination to make a decision.

19 MS. MJOLSNESS: But if you found  
20 information that definitely leaned toward it hurting  
21 the people that live by these power lines, you would  
22 certainly put that in here, wouldn't you?

23 MR. STORM: If I found peer-reviewed  
24 information that point to evidence of an impact, I  
25 would point that out in the EIS saying okay, there

1       are these studies that show this and there are these  
2       studies over here that show this. And I think we've  
3       done that, but we can certainly take another look at  
4       that.

5               Now, you might -- what I try not to do is  
6       add more weight than what the scientific community  
7       has added. So if there's 80 percent of the  
8       scientific community coming out on this side, which  
9       states EMF at the levels that we see in transmission  
10      lines, we can't find a causal effect and there's 20  
11      percent saying, well, we disagree with that, that's  
12      how it's laid out in the document.

13             MS. MJOLSNESS: Okay. That's what I  
14      would like to see, too, you know, how close -- you  
15      know, because the way that I'm seeing it here is  
16      that, you know, EMF is not a risk. Well, yeah, my  
17      power line may not be a risk to Taconite itself, the  
18      people who live here because they're far enough  
19      away. I'm trying to see how far away they feel it  
20      is not a risk or how far away they feel it is a  
21      risk.

22             MR. STORM: Well, we do talk in the  
23      document about levels of EMF and research done  
24      around those levels. And I do so many of these, I'm  
25      not exactly sure of every word that's in this thing,

1 but I do believe that the consensus is -- with our  
2 Department of Health, our consensus is that the  
3 level that we see in the vicinity of transmission  
4 lines are not -- we don't see a causal effect there.

5 There is some anecdotal update out  
6 there -- we do state this, there is an anecdotal  
7 update out there around EMF and childhood leukemia.  
8 But there's no causal -- the science out there can't  
9 find the cause and effect. So there could be some  
10 other variable in the studies that do the  
11 analytical -- in the studies that do the anecdotal  
12 evaluation of EMF and childhood leukemia, when it  
13 goes above that anecdotal look and it goes into  
14 looking at research studies trying to find  
15 causation, they haven't been able to find that.

16 And I think we lay it out like that in  
17 the EIS. The EIS, like I said, is not a document  
18 that's going to make a determination on something  
19 and it's also not a -- it's also not going to do its  
20 own research. We're not going to go out there and  
21 do a five-year study on something. We're looking at  
22 what is out there.

23 MS. MJOLSNES: Yeah. But isn't that  
24 what the environmental impact is? How do you know  
25 what to put in there if you don't do some sort of

1 study?

2 MR. STORM: What we do is we look at the  
3 studies that are out there on that given topic, and  
4 what is that telling us. We don't go out there and  
5 do basic research. I mean, we're not going to,  
6 through this process, design and implement a  
7 laboratory study to try to see if there is an effect  
8 of EMF on cell tissue.

9 I mean, we're not going to do that  
10 research ourself. We're going to look to the  
11 literature out there to see what are people who are  
12 doing that research finding, and that's what we look  
13 at.

14 MS. MJOLSNES: The other thing that you  
15 might want to look at is the stress effect of all  
16 the people that you're effecting here. That is  
17 definitely a health issue, too.

18 MR. STORM: Okay. Thank you.

19 Okay. Anyone else want to speak, ask  
20 questions, delve into something?

21 Okay. I really appreciate you coming  
22 out. I can tell you I've been doing this for nine,  
23 ten years, your input does have an impact on how  
24 these projects move forward, if they move forward.  
25 And if they do, how they're mitigated, you know,

1           what exactly we end up with in the end.

2                       So, again, you have until March twenty --  
3           whatever I said.

4                       MR. MADEJCZYK: 26th.

5                       MR. STORM: 26th to get me your comments.  
6           If you have questions, my card's on the table, give  
7           me a call. We can certainly talk through the  
8           process or anything else you'd like.

9                       Again, take advantage -- if you have a  
10          site-specific question or a route-specific question,  
11          take advantage of the GSI gentlemen in the back and  
12          the posters and the applicant and their  
13          representatives here and pick their brains.

14                      Okay. I thank you, and with that, we'll  
15          close the meeting.

16                      (Public comment concluded.)

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